



Submission to Galway City Council on Draft Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

April 2022

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POPULATION & HOUSING

The population of Galway City has grown considerably over the last number of years. According to CSO figures recorded in 2016, the population size of Galway City was 79,934 which marked a 41% increase over the previous ten years; surpassing the national average increase.

Further significant growth is planned. In 2020, The Irish Independent¹ quoted Brendan McGrath, Chief Executive of Galway City Council, saying the city's expectation is that its population will grow by 50pc to 120,000 by 2040.

Housing Availability

While Galway City has experienced population growth in recent years, the development of properties has been slow and unfortunately has not kept pace with the growing need for housing in our City. An average of 146 new dwellings per annum has been completed in the City since 2013.

Galway City Council - New Dwelling Completion by Type of House				
Year	Single House	Scheme House	Apartments	Total
2013	16	4	30	50
2014	8	12	27	47
2015	16	13	22	51
2016	12	69	32	113
2017	20	99	30	149
2018	21	106	12	139
2019	29	158	67	254
2020	18	156	32	206
2021	26	213	65	304

Figure 1: Source <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=NDQ06&PLanguage=0>

Approximately 1,263 households² are currently on the Social Housing Waiting List in Galway City, many of whom have been on the list for several years. While many Local Authority areas saw a reduction in the number of households on their Social Housing Waiting List in 2021, the need in Galway City increased by 2.4% (the fourth highest increase in the country).

¹ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/galway-could-gain-1000-homes-in-plan-to-develop-brownfield-site-38885291.html>

² Housing Agency, Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2021

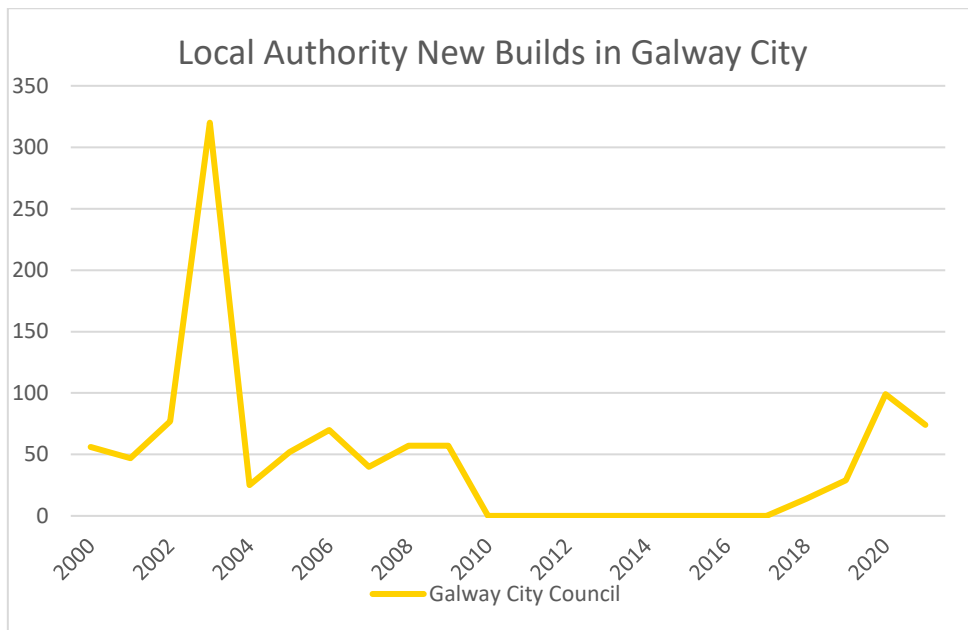


Figure 2: Source Gov.ie, Overall social housing provision, Local Authority Build

Type of Housing

There is a severe shortage of one and two-bed properties within the City across private, affordable and social housing and development is not matching the profile of need. Only 21% of the 304 new dwellings completed in the Galway City Local Authority Area in 2021 were apartments. 67% (844 of 1,263 households) of households³ on the Social Housing Waiting List are single person households.

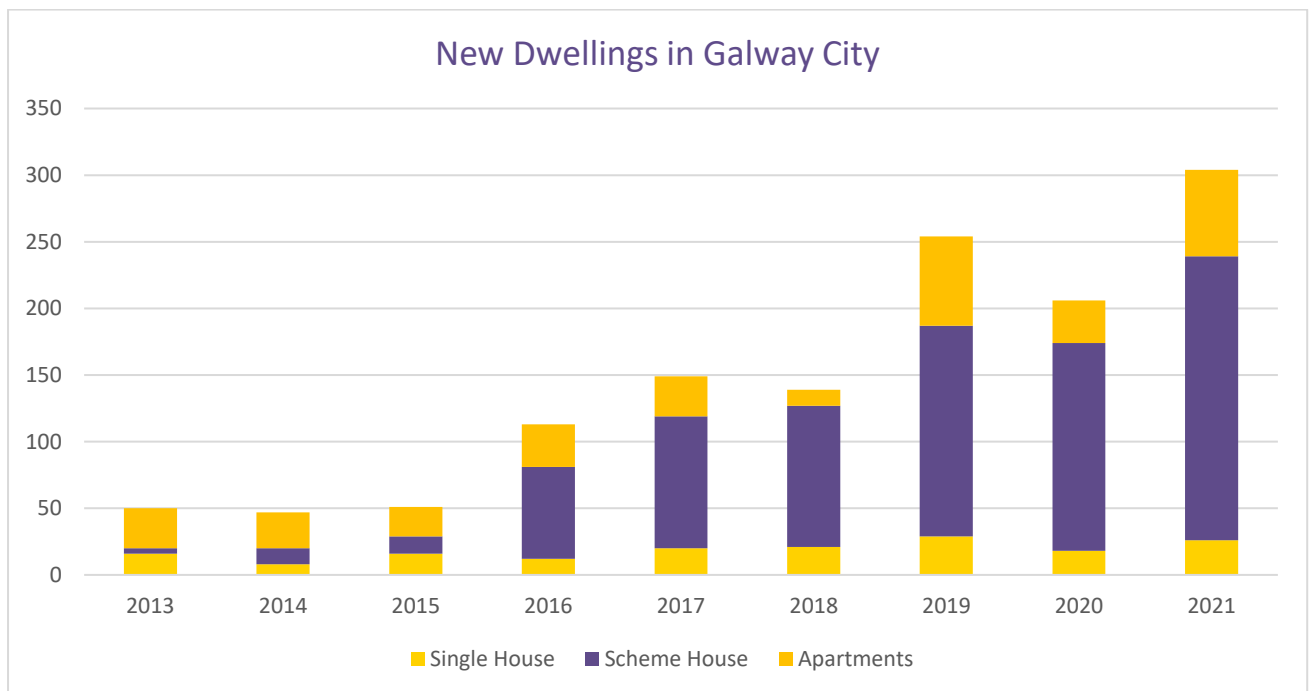


Figure 3: Source <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=NDQ06&PLanguage=0>

The current supply of housing and the rate of new housing coming on stream in Galway City is wholly inadequate relative to demand across social, affordable and private housing. The consequence of this has been an increasing overreliance on the Private Rental Sector.

³ Housing Agency, Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2021

Private Rented Sector

Demand within the Private Rental Sector in Galway City is far outstripping the current supply. Those relying on private rented accommodation include people in receipt of social housing benefits, private residents and students. Additionally, Galway has a vibrant tourist industry and there is significant demand for short term lets through sites such as AirBnB. On April 11th 2022, one website reported 1,782 active short-term rentals across Galway City and County. 1,243 of these, 69%, were entire homes⁴.

With demand for housing far greater than the available supply, the most basic economic principle applies – prices increase.

Over the past six years, average rents in Galway City have increased by 67%⁵, climbing from an average rent of €900 to now €1,504 per month. Very few households have enjoyed a similar increase in net income. With such a reliance on the private rental sector and relentless increases in rent prices over recent years, Galway City has become out of reach for many within our community. Nationally, it was reported in 2019 that “more than one in five tenants paying market rent in Ireland are paying over 40% of their disposable income on housing, with almost one in ten paying over 60% and more than one in twenty paying 75%”⁶. For many, the increasing percentage of income being spent on rent is putting pressure on household income and food and fuel poverty are significant issues. Current rates of inflation are compounding these issues.

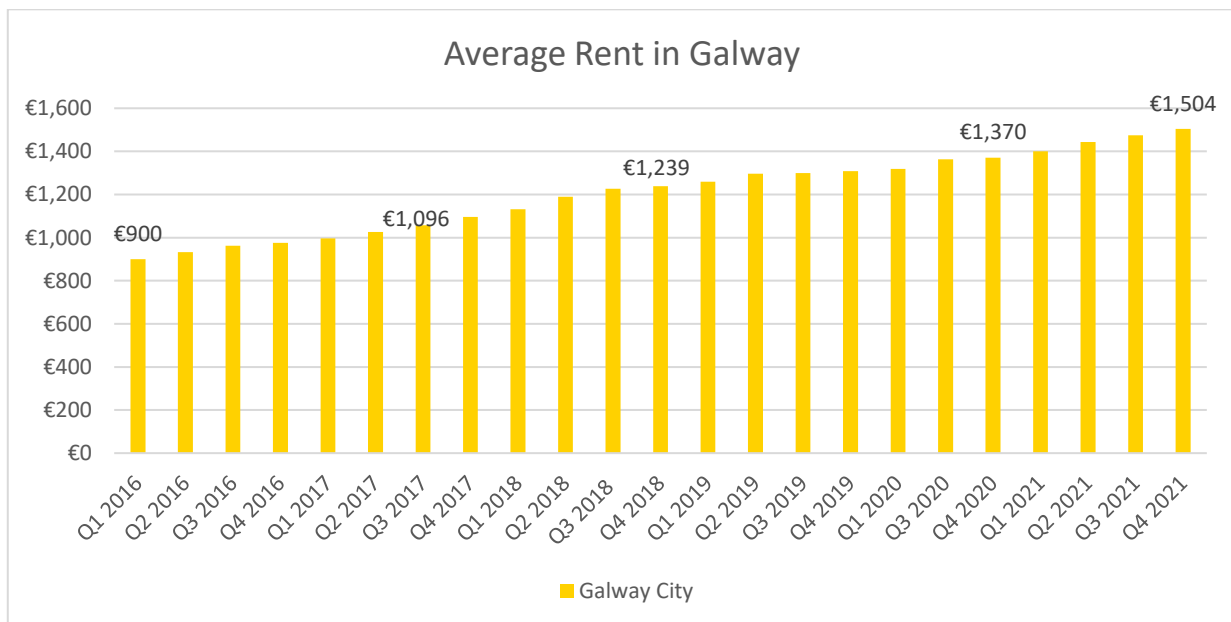


Figure 4: Source: Daft.ie Rental Reports

Locked Out of the Market, a periodic research study conducted by the Simon Communities of Ireland, tracks the number of properties advertised to rent in the Private Rental Sector that are within the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits. The latest report released in January 2021 showed that for the fifth study in a row, there were no properties that fell within the HAP limits in Galway City Centre out of the average of 62 that were available to rent. In the wider Galway City area, there were just three properties that fell within the HAP limits out of the average 61 properties available to rent⁷.

60% of social housing for Galway City in 2021 was delivered through HAP tenancies through the Private Rental Sector⁸. However, the Private Rental Sector does not provide security of tenure and is unaffordable

⁴ Source: <https://www.airdna.co/vacation-rental-data/app/ie/default/galway/overview>

⁵ Daft.ie Rental Report Q1 2016 – Q4 2020

⁶ [One in 10 households pay over 60% of income on rent \(irishtimes.com\)](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/one-in-10-households-pay-over-60-of-income-on-rent-1.4444444)

⁷ [Simon Communities in Ireland > Publications > Research](https://www.simoncommunities.ie/en/publications/research)

⁸ [gov.ie - Overall social housing provision \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications/overall-social-housing-provision/)

for many of those within our community who rely on social housing, as well as those on low and middle incomes.

Renting in Galway City has become unsustainable for many in the local community who are facing high rents, low supply and in some cases, sub-standard accommodation.

The lack of supply and affordability within Galway City’s rental sector has resulted in hundreds of individuals and families falling into homelessness or finding themselves at risk of losing their home over recent years. Additionally, many others have had to uproot their entire lives to move out of the city as they simply cannot afford to live here.

IMPACT ON HOMELESSNESS

The sharpest edge of the housing crisis is the homelessness crisis.

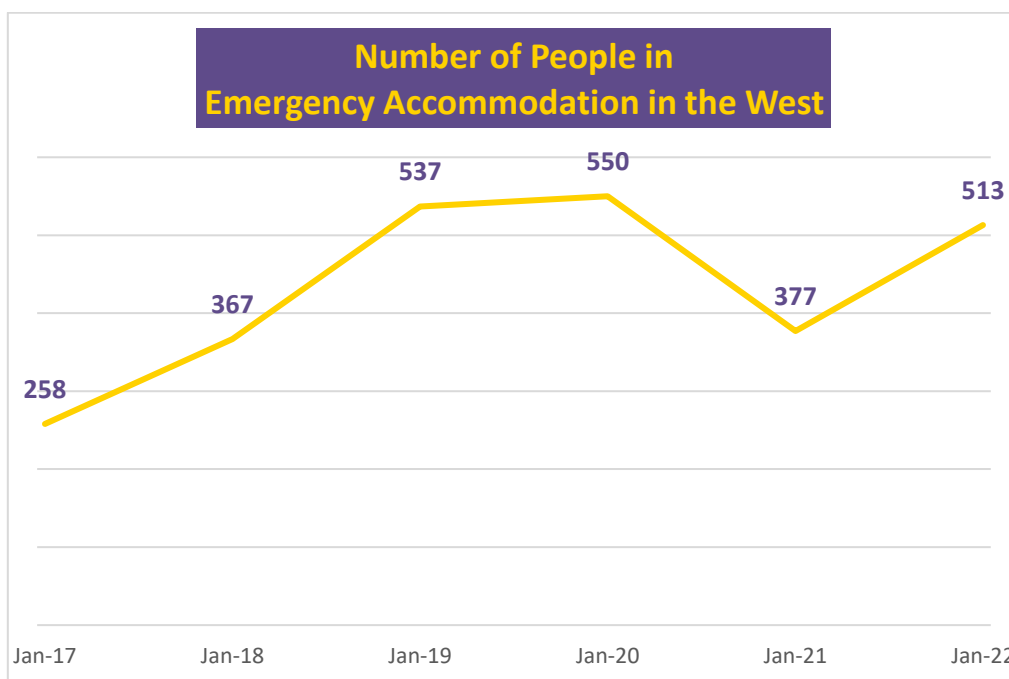


Figure 5: Source Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homelessness Data.

According to the Department of Housing’s data, there have been between 237 and 576 people living in Emergency Accommodation in the West of Ireland (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon) at any one time over the last five years. 36% on average are children. 60% on average are in the Galway region⁹.

In addition to those in Emergency Accommodation in Galway, hundreds more are living in ‘hidden homelessness’, sleeping rough or in cars, couchsurfing or involuntarily sharing.

While 2020 saw a very welcome drop in the numbers in Emergency Accommodation in the West, there has been a significant increase throughout 2021 since the moratorium on evictions was lifted as Covid-19 restrictions were eased.

In 2021, Galway Simon Community supported 814 households comprising 1,511 individuals. There was no decrease in the demand for Services during the pandemic. 63% of those who turned to Galway Simon for

⁹ Source Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homelessness Data. (Average between January 2016 – December 2020)

help were registered with Galway City Council for housing. The homelessness crisis remains a very significant issue within our City.

For those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, the Covid-19 pandemic has been a crisis on top of a crisis. It is impossible to follow public health advice to 'stay at home' if you have no home.

Personal Stories

Behind all of these statistics are real people – men, women and children whose lives have been turned upside down by the trauma of homelessness. The impact of this trauma, on adults and children, has been well documented.

Costs of Private Emergency Accommodation and Housing First

The costs incurred in providing Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA) in Galway City have risen substantially in recent years from around 300,000 in 2016 to an estimated 1.2million in 2018¹⁰ and 3.8m in 2019¹¹ - a thirteen fold increase in four years. The total Homeless Services budget (including Covid 19 costs) ran to 11m for Galway City Council in 2021¹², inclusive of a significant percentage budgeted for PEA.

The Government is committed to Housing First to provide long term sustainable solutions for those most entrenched in homelessness. A National Housing First Office has been established in the Housing Agency, a second National Director of Housing First has been appointed and a second National Housing First Implementation Plan was published in December 2021.

Galway Simon Community welcomes and endorses the commitment to Housing First and Housing Led solutions to homelessness. Galway Simon and Cope Galway are collaborating to deliver a target of 30 tenancies over the course of the 3 year pilot for Galway City. There is a very high tenancy sustainment rate within the Service and very high fidelity (based on independent research) to the principles of Housing First. The tenants who have been housed through this Service are finding significant stability in their lives and the Service represents dramatically better value for money than Emergency Accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON DRAFT CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Galway Simon Community welcomes the publication of the Draft City Development Plan and thanks the Council members and officials for the consultation and work that have gone into its development.

In relation to Section 3 Housing and Sustainable Development, Galway Simon Community recommends a stronger emphasis on Eradicating Homelessness in line with National Policy outlined in Housing for All.

Given the increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness or the risk of being homeless in our City, and the devastating impact this has on people's health and well-being, there must be a stronger emphasis on eradicating homelessness in the City Development Plan. The Draft Plan includes homelessness under only one action point (below), and references a Plan which is due to expire prior to the period of the City Development Plan 2023-2029 commencing.

¹⁰ Galway City Tribune, August 20th 2018

¹¹ [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - Homelessness Financial Report End of Year 2019 - West (www.gov.ie)

¹² [Adopted Budget Book 2021.pdf \(galwaycity.ie\)](https://www.galwaycity.ie)

14. Work with the voluntary, community and public sector in addressing the housing needs of homeless people with the endeavour to eliminate homelessness and having regard to the measures in the West Region Homelessness Action Plan 2020 - 2022 and relevant national policy including those set out in Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland.

Specifically, Galway Simon recommends:

1. Eradicating Homelessness to be a separate subsection within Section 3 Housing and Sustainable Development (as is Traveller Accommodation) in recognition of the importance of this goal within the City Development Plan. In addressing homelessness, Galway City Council can make big improvements in several SDG areas – 1 No Poverty; 2 Zero Hunger; 3 Good Health and Wellbeing; 6 Clean Water and Sanitation; 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; 10 Reducing Inequalities and 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities [PowerPoint Presentation \(un.org\)](#)
2. The Regional Homeless Forum, which is comprised of key stakeholders, to develop a new Regional Homeless Action Plan aligned to Pathway 2 of Housing for All (Pathway to Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion) to commence in 2023. If and as appropriate, a specific Action Plan for the City to be developed out of the Regional Plan.
3. Galway City Council to be adequately resourced with key personnel to deliver on the actions relating to the delivery of new private, affordable and social housing over the period of the plan. For people who are at risk of homelessness or staying in Emergency Accommodation as a result of the Housing Crisis, the delivery of an adequate supply of additional housing will end their homelessness and their contact with homeless services.
4. New National Strategies due to be launched under Housing for All to be fully implemented under the City Development Plan, including
 - The second Housing First Implementation Plan which supports rough sleepers and others who experience entrenched homelessness (published Dec 2021). This Plan will build on the delivery of 30 Housing First tenancies in Galway City over the three- year pilot period June 2019 to June 2022, with a minimum target of an additional 30 tenancies to 2026.
 - In parallel with the Housing First programme, Housing Led tenancies – with intensive supports provided by homeless services – must also be supported.
 - The National Homelessness Action Committee is working on Homelessness Prevention measures. The Galway City Development Plan must commit to implementing Prevention measures outlined in the forthcoming strategy in full, to minimise to the greatest extent possible new entries into homelessness.
 - The new National Youth Homelessness Strategy is due to be published in Q3 2022. Galway City has a dedicated Youth Service, which is a three-way partnership between Galway City Council, Túsla and Galway Simon Community established in 2016 to address youth homelessness in the City. The Service was expanded from 8 to 12 residential spaces in 2021, and housing units which are ringfenced for care leavers are being acquired under the Túsla CAS programme. Additionally, the Youth Service provides outreach prevention and tenancy sustainment supports to young adults at risk of homelessness at this critical time in their lives.

It is well documented that people who suffer significant trauma in their lives may experience significant mental health and/or addiction issues. Recent research again graphically articulates

the extent to which service users in Cork Simon's homeless services had experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). (Adverse Childhood Experiences in a Cohort of Adults Experiencing Homelessness. Sharon Lambert, Raegan Murphy, Graham Gill-Emerson, Aidan Horan and Anna Marie Naughton. The Irish Psychologist. April 2022. Volume 48. Issue 2).

Some people who have experienced significant trauma and who suffer from mental health difficulties and/or addiction issues, require ongoing support in order to sustain their tenancy and actively participate in society. This is expressly recognised in Housing for All in its ambition to develop and implement a number of targeted strategies to address the housing needs of specific cohorts and to support social inclusion.

5. The two-year review of the Housing Strategy (Policy 3.1 Housing Strategy, Action 22) should be carried out at two-year intervals by a panel with relevant expertise utilising key data sets compared with the baseline data, and recommendations in relation to revising policy, delivery targets etc should be developed if appropriate. Secure, affordable homes are key to eradicating homelessness. A number of the Actions outlined in the Draft City Development Plan, if delivered in a timely manner and at the appropriate scale, will create a greater supply of housing which in turn may reduce pressures on the housing market. However, housing delivery alleviating the homelessness crisis will be dependent on population growth in the City. Baseline data should be established for regular reviews of the Housing Strategy in line with evolving population patterns and demand for housing of different types over the period of the plan.